

AMASSING LIFE



Giulia Bencivenga

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“Someday the lens is going to be perfect and then
we’re all going to see clearly, see what a staggering, wonderful,
beautiful world it is...”

Henry Miller

The grim rose refuses to bask
It asks for nothing other than sensuality
Affectation takes hold with violence, forcing totality on its subordinates
Thank you for the tea, you know I like it sweet
Unlike truth, I bend to rearrange my intestines for love

★

Letting the dream die while I make myself toast
In the morning, on my way to work,
I, disillusioned by the scope of promise,
Strain my eyes looking for my exit
Ha ha ha ha ha

★

There is only life
And what drains it
A stick stuck straight into a muddy hole

★

Fuck capital, fuck your “working class” parents, too
Fuck clipping the ends
Of the flowers every few days
To make the bloom last just the bit
Longer

★

Took me two decades to heed the director's warning
But it
Had already happened
That she knew, she saw it in my movements
A warning always arrives late
Saying *Be careful, or there's more to come*
Isn't it beautiful?
Our inability to imagine anything
Besides the present and its bounty?

★

I know what you mean— about the glare—
Flies drowning in honey
Being that beautiful is a lonely trap
Having life behind the eyes requires an explicit
Depth of melancholy
Don't let the beauty suffer alone
Suffocate it by sliding a bag firmly over its head
Watch ecstasy take hold

★

There is something extraordinary about a man
Who knows how to shut the fuck up

★

I didn't know the idea of the whole preceded the idea of parts
So I began by gathering bits of myself
I had dispersed around the world
A Texas rooster gains familiarity with Venus
The Canadian chill with the big cock
Everyone's heart a cloaked mirror
It could host a poet
I'm a woman from an ancient city
I live in those Tuscan umbrella pines with the cicadas
Hoping that rising from the Earth once in thirteen years is enough
To leave a lasting impression of my soft bed
Enough to remove the cloak

★

My ducks are in a row and caving in toward the center of the Earth
Capricorn's heavy lid on my airy mind
Create a look that wants death at every turn
Absence, desire, and a whole lot of luck—
Burnt my tongue on seared metal now I'm a numb kiss
God, please let me feel time for the rest of it

★

What exactly are we afraid of if not sinking into the hole?
Is desire more telescopic or kaleidoscopic in nature?
A puff of smoke passes by my head
To think is to want in silence
Spiral then spit, spit then spiral

★

And horror. Is something to be said about horror—
how it sublimates the dense vulgarity of my heart
into a delicious sigh?

★

A dandelion rebels in the soil of my plumeria
Its very existence deemed infectious
So generative, so wrong
Poor little fool
Understanding want, I don't use gloves
Sticking my fingers into the damp soil
Saving the bigger tree requires such external force
Doesn't it seem so silly now? Anxiety—
The roots long and white

★

The last time you said “No”
I went to the bathroom, took the blade you used
To shave
Made a mess of my sex
I need a constant stream of life
To feel, it’s easy
To cook dinner
To scrape the remnants of food from dishes
To tell people you love them
To not receive the love you want
It’s even surprisingly easy to drown in it all
Some do so in a shallow pool

★

You left me alone to fix the damn vacuum machine,
Make the bed, water the plants,
Open my eyes in the morning
The angel in my medicine cabinet called it abandon
But the middle of the ocean is barren not because it's lonely
Ah, the search for simplicity left my pockets filled with sand
Plummeting deeper and deeper to the top of the lookout point

★

The echo cannot meet me this high on the dunes
A seagull fractal mews at the ghost on my shoulder
I've learned it's not wise to stay haunted
Releasing the idea of myself
For a bigger whole

★

I unclenched my jaw and let you fall out
Right before the moment you came
The mess made on your heart is yours—
Clean it up yourself

★

It's all such a disaster, God
The planets squaring each other— the friction!
It's going to take endless life to make amends
This is something Nietzsche himself couldn't account for
An eternal recurrence is never the fucking same, is it?
It's not enough to grab life as it saunters forth
A dialectics of space is needed for the body
In the meantime, I show my nipples to a room of friends
And ask, "Are they too fleshy? There isn't too much
Flesh, is there?"
We take a picture, one where I look oh so pretty,
And leave it at that

★

Contrary to what that Taurus says,
Nothing that is real is necessary
The moments between events are imperceptible to history
Like when I felt your heart lap at the shores of my mind
And finally had that very good idea

★

There is nothing that isn't everywhere else
Petals, rich and velvety, fall from the sky
And into my gaping mouth
I am laughing with my mother and father
We are all laughing

★

It's the end that will inevitably come
No amount of weapons can stifle this ecstasy

★

If I concentrated hard enough
I could still smell you on my sheets
If I stretched my arms into the sky
I could pluck my stupidity from its roots
And then we could really give this an honest go
The poetry is there somewhere
But first you have to swat away the flies

★

I get that to tell you *Spit in my mouth* is vulgar
But isn't vulgarity the predecessor of becoming?
Are we not born amongst piss and shit, as Augustine said?
I air dry my hair and let the future's fissure carry me
Through another Tuesday

★

There was a young woman none of us could fully remember
But for a white hot moment she was a star
Her pleasure made the whole school feral
They'd say she loved the taste of her own flora so much
She'd be able to subsist for weeks with just a spoon
Reminds me of us
How stories are a beacon for the perverted, broken losers

★

While nothing has ever disrupted anything—
Time marching back and forth with its splendid candor—
It could be said laughter reverberates
Outside the economy of time
In that fertile place where we notice the flowers' eyes
As they gaze upon us in the freshly-manured field
Actually— no— I was wrong
Nothing *does* disrupt
In a blooming possibility of touch
It's so nice to laugh about nothing with you

★

She is an archeologist of affect
The way she whispers her joy into seashells
Gives the ocean a taste of money
Her siren song— I'll gladly die in it
I'd forget forever to sing with her

★

A carcass rises to the surface as it decomposes
This happened to me once—
The ocean swallowed me, glad to eat the lovely whore,
And in my last moments I thought about joy,
How it makes me cry

★

Weeping because I recognize myself
Everywhere, in everything
Perhaps I have forgotten myself
Confronted by the sea
Towering over its irredeemable shadow, a smile on my face
This schizophrenic frenzy is always new, revolting
“Nobody knows why”
We see cause and effect interchangeably
Objects orienting us toward our selves
If we had any respect for them— for us—
We would acknowledge this

★

I would apologize
For how the oscillating vibrancy of my love has changed
The discursive environment, but then I'd have to
Apologize for the rose, its bees—
Salt, too. Don't forget salt!

★

A facet of the soul is the soul turned against itself
Face up and outwards always— alert

★

If I had to rewrite my vows to tell you what I've learned about love I would say this:

Knowing is not understanding. *That* we can all agree on. But there are nefarious forces that try to tell us that knowing and understanding live asymptotically to feeling. Luckily, I am here to wipe the lens clean. Knowing is the absence of feeling. Knowing lives cut off from the body in the mind, and as such is of little use to assuage the tempestuous raptures of the will(s). Understanding is, fundamentally, an integration of feeling and knowing in the body. You understand, I know you do. And that is how I understand and how I love. Knowing with intention. Knowing with feeling.

★

What the director said to me:

If I were you, I'd start now

Finding a new body—

One that is moored

★

Rough against my skin when I first wore it
The identity soon wore *me*:

VICTIM

Remember the ruse!

In the park on the hill, that is *not* me
A woman adjusting her glasses while writing this poem, *no*
Neither velocity *nor* placement
But a particle dancing between stages of arousal
The gnarled abstraction blooms into resentment
Resentment for the amassment of life
I shed, keep moving

★

Dear God,
The people you put on this Earth to build a great big tree
Are wondering what the point of metaphysics is
They don't know that wind resistance is what makes flight possible
That the body stores the unconscious in a series of tubes
They don't even talk to their neighbors
Won't you flood us one last night
With that warm breeze that makes skirts shorter
So I can finally know something worth building a tree for

★

The oleanders that terrorized me in my youth
Were torn out in favor of a lemon and some oranges
And yet the fear persists
And yet the soil is poison

★

The smell of wet cement
The slit in the sidewalk
The weed that grows there
The density and porousness of life
My tongue lapping up the condensation
Imagine what freedom would *feel* like

★

I cannot give you my bastard word
But these words of longing will follow you into the dark
Promise me they will

★

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You know who you are. In every incarnation, I will find you.

Giulia Bencivenga is alive.